

# Eldon Laidig

*Ambassador for the arts and humanities*

Eldon Laidig recalls that in 1982, the original Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities “was basically concrete blocks.” Through his leadership and persistence, this major Arvada attraction has become known as the crown jewel of Arvada.

As a board member of the Arvada Historical Society, Laidig already was known to employ diplomacy in city planning efforts, and he volunteered time and input on the expansion goals of the center. His vision “was to have a regional arts center that would pull people from all over the metropolitan area. I thought it would assist the city economically and that citizens would develop a love for the multidisciplinary aspects of the center.”

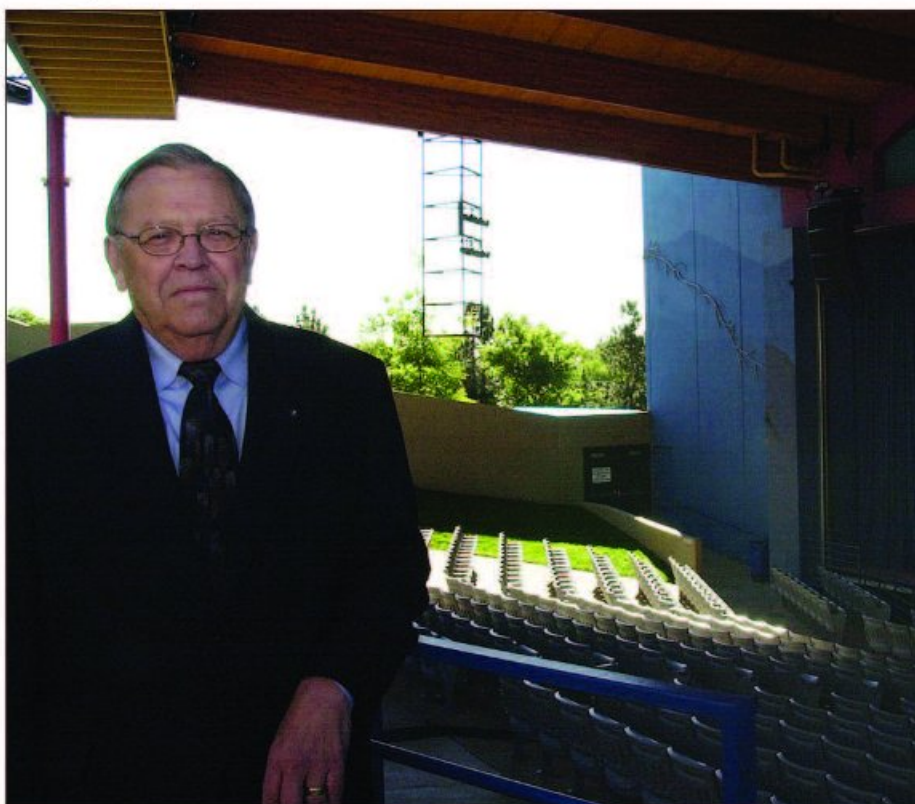
With a 25-year career as junior high school principal in the Jefferson County R-1 School District, Laidig also recognized that the center had an opportunity to educate children, exposing them to different kinds of art.

The Arvada City Council appointed Laidig to the Arvada Council for the Arts and Humanities in 1987, and three months later he was elected chairman. With some resident opposition to the expansion of the center, Laidig recognized the need for public awareness and involvement.

He launched a vigorous capital campaign, encouraging people from “different parts of the city and different walks of life” to become involved. The Pro-Arvada Committee he set up with Arvada resident Lois Lindstrom Kennedy used yard signs, neighborhood coffees, fund-raising and door-to-door canvassing to pass a ballot issue with a two-thirds majority supporting the expansion.

Laidig’s leadership encouraged a well-conceived space with architectural harmony of new and old structures. His vision of how the facility would benefit Arvada resulted in a world-class cultural center that continues to inspire talent from the community and surrounding regions.

The comprehensive planning skills that Laidig brought to the Arvada Center project have been put to good use in



Eldon Laidig continues to be one of the most devoted advocates for the Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities.

other philanthropic endeavors. As the founding director of Arvada Sister Cities International, he established Sister City relationships with Mechelen, Belgium, and Kyzylorda, Kazakhstan.

Laidig and his wife, Gayle, open their home to travelers from these cities, offering a hand of friendship in an effort to develop understanding with other people throughout the world.

“It’s amazing what you can accomplish,” he said, when finding common ground with people of other countries.

Proud of the investment he made in his community, this self-described “little ‘ole country boy from Kansas” has lifted Arvada to inspired heights in cultural evolution and community outreach.

*Story by Diane Brunson-Jones  
Photo by Kathy Schneider*

## At a glance

- Contribution: Arvada Center advocate, city ambassador
- Born: Dec. 20, 1932, in Oberlin, Kan.
- Arvada resident: August 1960 to present
- Married: Gayle on Sept. 16, 2000
- Children: Larry (Eldon’s), Brent, Becky and Curtis (Gayle’s)
- Career: Certified financial planner, former junior high school principal

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